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Jesus Christ

The Source of Enduring Joy

Every member of the Lord's restored Church who is striving to remember and honor sacred covenants and keep the commandments can receive the gift of enduring joy.

I recently was in a spiritually powerful testimony meeting and listened intently as a devoted sister declared, "I have great joy because of the Father's plan of salvation." Immediately obvious to me was the fact that this woman was not simply speaking familiar words. The light that shone in her eyes, the spiritually dignified tone of her voice, her bright and peaceful countenance—everything about her affirmed the truthfulness of what she was saying. She was filled with joy. She radiated joy. Indeed, she was becoming more like the Savior and receiving His image in her countenance (see Alma 5:14), a part of which was becoming joyful.

Her expression of faith caused me to remember the lyrics of several familiar hymns:

*With faith, we hold the iron rod
And find in this our joy.¹*

*Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear;
But with joy wend your way. . . .
'Tis better far for us to strive
Our useless cares from us to drive;
Do this, and joy your hearts will swell—
All is well! All is well!²*

*Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives:
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"³*

And in this Christmas season, we will sing:

*“Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.”*⁴

And

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King! . . .
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*⁵

Since becoming president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, President Russell M. Nelson frequently has extended an invitation to the people of the world that includes the promise of joy: “Our message to the world is simple and sincere: we invite all of God’s children on both sides of the veil to come unto their Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have *enduring joy*, and qualify for eternal life.”⁶

What exactly is this joy about which we sing and teach and which we have the obligation to offer to all humankind? And how is it obtained? Let us now consider together answers to these two important questions.

WHAT IS JOY?

A common dictionary definition of joy is “a *feeling* of great pleasure [or] happiness.”⁷ In comparison, the Guide to the Scriptures describes joy as “a *condition* of great happiness [that results] from righteous living.”⁸ Interestingly, our gospel perspective helps us to understand that joy is more than a fleeting feeling or emotion; rather, it is a spiritual gift and a state of being and becoming. For this reason I described the sister who bore her testimony as filled with and radiating joy.

As a wise and loving father, Lehi taught his sons that the very purpose of mortal life is for all people to have joy:

“But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

“Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:24–25).

Adam and Eve summarized the vital lessons they learned from the Eternal Father and from their own experience. Adam declared: “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life *I shall have joy*, and again in the flesh I shall see God” (Moses 5:10; emphasis added).

And Eve said: “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and *the joy of our redemption*, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient” (Moses 5:11; emphasis added).

The Father’s plan of happiness enables His children to obtain a physical body and gain mortal experience, to choose righteousness in the presence of evil and temptation, and to assist Heavenly Father with His great plan through honorable marriage and parenthood.⁹ Ultimately, at the time of our resurrection, “the spirit and the body [are] to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive *a fulness of joy*” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:17; emphasis added).

HOW IS JOY OBTAINED?

I believe the contrast between righteous joy and worldly fun is instructive and helps us better understand the nature of true joy. Joy comes from exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, worthily receiving and faithfully honoring sacred ordinances and covenants, and striving to become deeply converted to the Savior and His purposes. Fun is the result of “amusement,” “playful [and] often boisterous action or speech,” or pleasurable diversion.¹⁰ A day on the rides at Disneyland is fun. Worthily preparing for and participating in the ordinance of the sacrament is joyful.

Joy primarily is spiritual; fun primarily is temporal. Joy primarily is enduring; fun primarily is temporary. Joy primarily is deep and rich; fun primarily is shallow. Joy primarily is whole and complete; fun primarily is partial. Joy primarily pertains to mortality and eternity; fun pertains only to mortality.



How important it is for us to never confuse or trade the enduring, deep joy of devoted discipleship for temporary and shallow fun.

The Redeemer is the ultimate and only source of enduring and eternal joy. The prophet Jacob testified: “But, behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, *and their joy shall be full forever*” (2 Nephi 9:18; emphasis added).

THE TRUE SOURCE OF JOY

Because of Heavenly Father’s plan and the Savior’s Atonement, sincere repentance invites us to turn to and depend upon Jesus Christ, the true source of joy. Please consider carefully the response of King Benjamin’s people to his teachings about the Savior’s Atonement:

“And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been

Because of the Savior’s Atonement, challenges and afflictions invite us to lift up our eyes to Jesus Christ, the true source of joy.

delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

“And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.

“And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, *and they were filled with joy*, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come” (Mosiah 4:1–3; emphasis added).

Because of Heavenly Father’s plan and the Savior’s Atonement, obedience invites us to follow Jesus Christ, the true source of joy. The Savior declared to His disciples:

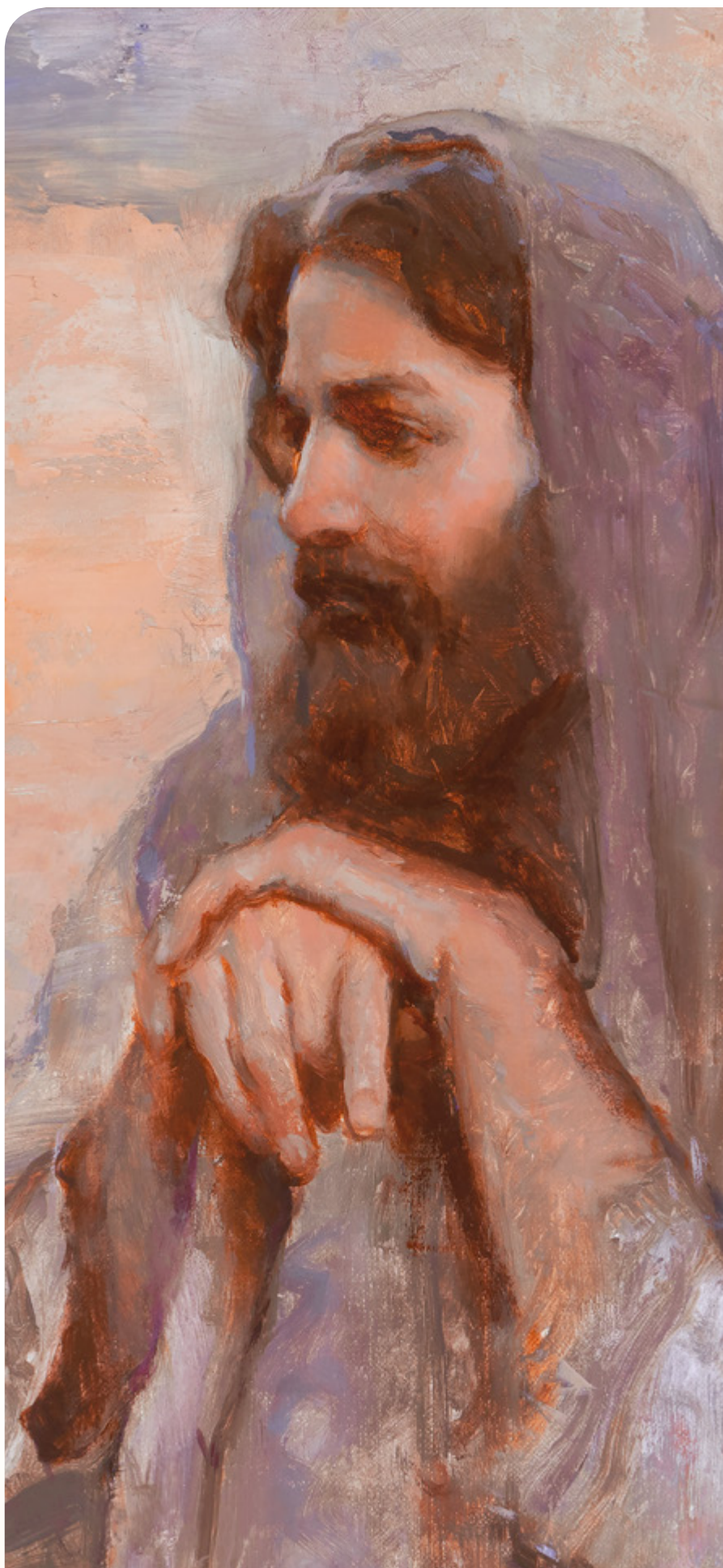
“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that your joy might be full*” (John 15:10–11; emphasis added).

“And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

“He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:27–28).

Because of Heavenly Father’s plan and the Savior’s Atonement, service invites us to emulate the character of Jesus Christ, the true source



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of joy. I recently read a statement by Kevin J Worthen, president of Brigham Young University, about deep joy. He said, “I have come to believe that one measure of our eternal progress is how much joy we derive from service.”¹¹

Alma the Younger told his son Helaman: “I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the *exceeding joy* of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Alma 36:24; emphasis added).

Recall the rejoicing of Ammon as he recounted his missionary work among the Lamanites:

“Behold, *my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy*, and I will rejoice in my God. . . .

“Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love, and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not *great reason to rejoice*? . . .

“. . . Now *this is my joy*, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever” (Alma 26:11, 13, 37; emphasis added).

Because of Heavenly Father’s plan and the Savior’s Atonement, challenges and afflictions invite us to lift up our eyes (see Isaiah 40:26; Psalm 123:1–2) to Jesus Christ, the true source of joy. The precious perspective provided by the restored gospel allows us to learn lessons that prepare us for eternity through the adversities of mortality. Our suffering and misfortunes can be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38) and consecrated for our gain (see 2 Nephi 2:2), “that [our] performance may be for the welfare of [our] soul” (2 Nephi 32:9). Thus joy endures in times and through experiences that are both good and bad because of our knowledge of the Father’s plan and of the Savior’s Atonement.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, obedience, service, and a gospel perspective about the trials we encounter in mortality all invite us to come unto the source of enduring joy—Jesus Christ. I invite you to identify, study, and prayerfully ponder additional principles that enable us to receive this important spiritual gift of joy.

A JOYFUL PROMISE

Enduring joy is not a blessing reserved for a select few. Rather, every member of the Lord’s restored Church who is striving to remember and honor sacred covenants and keep the commandments can receive this gift, according to God’s will and timing. In this Christmas season, may each of us strive to appreciate more fully the supernal gift of joy. As we do so, may we begin to see with new eyes and hear with new ears as “Saints and angels sing,” as we “repeat the sounding joy,” and as we “ever worship God.”¹²

I joyfully declare my sure witness of the living reality and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. ■

From a devotional address, “That They Might Have Joy,” delivered at Brigham Young University on December 4, 2018.

NOTES

1. “As Zion’s Youth in Latter Days,” *Hymns*, no. 256.
2. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
3. “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” *Hymns*, no. 136.
4. “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks,” *Hymns*, no. 211.
5. “Joy to the World,” *Hymns*, no. 201.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Let Us All Press On,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 118–19; emphasis added.
7. English Oxford Living Dictionaries, “joy,” en.oxforddictionaries.com; emphasis added.
8. Guide to the Scriptures, “joy,” scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org; emphasis added.
9. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 145.
10. *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “fun,” merriam-webster.com.
11. Kevin J Worthen, “Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve” (Brigham Young University commencement address, Aug. 16, 2018), 3, speeches.byu.edu.
12. “Joy to the World.”